

CENTRAL CORRIDOR & LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT

A City of Saint Paul Info Sheet of *Frequently Asked Questions*

May 17, 2006*

**The date each question was last updated will be listed at the end of the answer. This will make it easier to check subsequent versions of the FAQ for changes.*

The City of Saint Paul is embarking on a major effort to promote construction of Light Rail Transit along University Avenue and into downtown Saint Paul. In addition, the City is embarking on a major planning process for the Central Corridor.

Mayor Chris Coleman has set these two related efforts as among the three highest priorities of his Administration. City staff, in coordination with community groups and other government agencies, is moving quickly to make substantial progress on both planning for LRT construction and planning for development in the Central Corridor.

These two major simultaneous efforts are *closely related but separate* efforts.

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How Will Planning for Light Rail Transit and Planning for Related Development Within the Central Corridor be Coordinated?

There are two separate “tracks” for LRT planning and land use/development planning.

The **LRT track** will address design and implementation for development of the actual LRT line. This is a multi-agency effort in which the City is a partner. Other partners include: Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority, City of Minneapolis, Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority, Metropolitan Council, Minnesota Department of Transportation, and the University of Minnesota.

The **types of issues** that will be addressed by the **LRT track** under the auspices of the **Metropolitan Council** include:

- analysis of environmental impacts through an *environmental impact statement*
- preliminary engineering and final design for construction of the LRT line
- funding for construction and operation of the LRT line
- design and location of tracks and stations
- interaction of vehicular traffic with the LRT (cross traffic, turn lanes, signals)
- connecting north-south bus service
- management of parking impacts (on-street, park and ride)
- pedestrian access to station platforms
- construction mitigation
- disadvantaged business enterprise opportunities
- streetscape design

The **land use/development planning track** will be a separate effort to create a vision and development strategy for Central Corridor in Saint Paul that is adopted as part of the City’s Comprehensive Plan. The ***Central Corridor Development Strategy*** will address the related land use, economic, and social development impacts that will result from this major public infrastructure investment. The City of Saint Paul is in charge here. A

community-based task force, appointed by the Saint Paul Planning Commission, will take the lead on this effort. The geographic scope of this second track is from the State Capitol west to the border with Minneapolis.

The **types of issues** to be addressed by the **land use/development planning track** include:

- land use planning and zoning
- density of new development
- design and quality of new development
- affordable housing
- minority business development and apprenticeship programs
- pedestrian and bicycle connections
- streetscape design
- parks and open spaces

The Planning Commission Task Force **will not** be responsible for, or address the planning and construction of the LRT line. (5/17/06)

What Stage Are We At for the LRT and Land Use/Development Planning Tracks?

LRT Track:

- The Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority is the lead agency on the draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS).
- The Draft EIS was released by the County for a 45-day public comment period that runs from April 21 – June 5, 2006.
- The Saint Paul City Council will hold its own public hearing to formulate the City's comments on the Draft EIS on May 17, 5:30 p.m., City Hall Council Chambers.
- The Metropolitan Council will select the locally preferred alternative (LRT or BRT and routing) for Central Corridor and send the preferred alternative, comments on the draft EIS, and completed "New Starts" funding criteria to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) by the end of June, 2006.
- The FTA will rate the project based on the "New Starts" criteria submitted. If the project rates well enough it will give the Metropolitan Council permission to begin Preliminary Engineering (expected late 2006).
- The Metropolitan Council will be in charge of Preliminary Engineering.
- The Metropolitan Council will oversee a public involvement process for the Preliminary Engineering phase, but that process has not been defined at this point.

Land Use/Development Planning Track:

- Mayor Coleman has asked the Planning Commission to appoint a community-based task force to oversee creation of a *Central Corridor Development Strategy*.
- The task force will include prominent community members representing a variety of interests and backgrounds.
- The task force and City staff will be assisted by a consulting firm with national

- experience in transit corridor development.
- The vision and development strategy will define a community vision for how the Central Corridor should grow and change over the next 20-25 years. It will reflect market realities and recognize that University Avenue has distinct segments that are very different from each other.
 - The goal is to take advantage of the opportunity LRT represents to create stronger businesses, more vibrant neighborhoods, and more beautiful urban places along all segments of the Central Corridor.
 - It is anticipated the task force will begin its work in late May 2006. (4/25/06)

CENTRAL CORRIDOR

What is the “Central Corridor?”

The Central Corridor is an area roughly four blocks north and south of University Avenue running from the State Capitol to the City boundary west of Highway 280. The Central Corridor contains areas of vibrant small retail activity, larger retail business, office buildings, industrial manufacturing and warehousing and new & existing housing.

The Central Corridor is also an area where new investments are cropping up throughout the length of University Avenue, and where substantial community investment is likely over the next decade. The proposed development of light rail transit on University Avenue has focused increased attention on the potential for new development along University Avenue and the Central Corridor.

Such trends offer substantial potential benefits and challenges for current businesses and residents in the Central Corridor. (4/25/06)

What are the Challenges for the Community in the Central Corridor?

Generally, new investments in the City are a positive thing. Investments often lead to more jobs, retail services, tax base and vibrancy in the city. But such investments can also lead to gentrification, resulting in dislocation of households and businesses.

Developments in the Central Corridor in the last few years have been driven by growing attractiveness for private investments because of its central location and access to I-94. It is inevitable that change within the Central Corridor will occur over the next decade, regardless of whether LRT is built. The community challenge is to ensure that such investments, on balance, deal with broad issues of equity, and creation of a community that embraces diversity. Some of the challenges raised include:

- Inclusion of current and historic community/neighborhood identity into new developments

- Retention of those characteristics and landmarks that enhance such neighborhood identity, including ethnic diversity
- Survival of the small business character of the east end of the Avenue
- Ensuring that women and minorities have preference for construction jobs
- Balancing the provision of parking and discouraging park and ride activity in the neighborhoods.
- Retaining the local investments along the Avenue
- Ensuring adequate opportunities for involvement in public decision-making processes (4/25/06)

What Forms of Public Participation Will be Used to Ensure Community Involvement in Land Use/Development Planning?

The Planning Commission's **Central Corridor Development Strategy Task Force** will be made up of community members who are representative of area residents, businesses and communities of color, as well as those with interest and expertise in areas such as affordable housing, real estate, urban design, finance, and sustainable development.

The task force will oversee creation of a vision and development strategy to address land use planning; zoning; and the density, design, and quality of new development. In addition, the task force will also establish working groups organized around various topic areas such as affordable housing; arts and culture; minority business development and apprenticeship programs; sustainable development; communications and marketing; and bicycle and pedestrian connections.

The Planning Commission task force and its working groups will use a variety of methods to reach out to the community. In addition to community meetings, we envision using outreach methods such as surveys, interviews, workshops, open houses, and forums to encourage community input. There will be a Central Corridor web page developed on the City's website (www.stpaul.gov) that will be a centralized location for information about LRT and Central Corridor. On-line surveys and opportunities to ask questions or provide comments will be built into the website. This web page is currently under development and should be available in the near future. (4/25/06)

What Do Current City Plans Say About Development in the Central Corridor?

The City's adopted **Comprehensive Plan** includes citywide chapters on land use, housing, transportation, parks, and libraries. The **Land Use and Transportation Plan chapters** identify University Avenue as a major transit corridor in the city. The Land Use plan chapter states the following: "New urban housing, offices, retail, and industrial development should all contribute through density and site design to the ridership base for public transportation . . ." (policy 6.3.2). The Citywide chapters of the Comprehensive Plan can be found on the City's website at www.stpaul.gov/depts/ped.

In addition to citywide chapters, the City has recently adopted small area plans for the Dale, Lexington and Snelling intersections along University Avenue. In general, these plans call for ***transit-oriented development***. Elements of transit-oriented development include: a mix of land uses with high job and housing density, and the design and location of buildings and walking areas that promote pedestrian movement, safety, and an appealing environment. The area plan for the Lexington and Snelling areas (***University Avenue Transit-Oriented Development Framework: Snelling and Lexington Areas***) can be found on the same website (above) as the citywide comprehensive plan chapters. The other plan (***University-Dale Transit-Oriented Development Study***) can be obtained by contacting PED planning staff (donna.drummond@ci.stpaul.mn.us). Additional small area plans will be developed for areas around proposed station locations as a subsequent phase after creation of the overall *Central Corridor Development Strategy*. (4/25/06)

LRT

What is Light Rail Transit? (LRT)

LRT is an electrically-powered train of up to three cars. It generally runs in the middle of city streets, down the center of highways or in tunnels. LRT can share the street with cars or be in an exclusive right of way.

The Central Corridor LRT will run on an exclusive right of way in the middle of University Avenue, with traffic on either side of it, and on streets in downtown. LRT will have curb-level loading and low floors for handicapped accessibility and quick loading. There will be stations every one mile or so, located in the LRT right of way. The LRT will run at speeds in the Central Corridor up to 35 mph. (4/25/06)

What are the Benefits of LRT?

Typically, the list of benefits of LRT includes:

- Reduction in air quality emissions over combustion engine vehicles and buses.
- Substantial increase in transit capacity (for University Avenue in the 50% to 100% range).
- Smooth, quiet, and comfortable ride.
- Easier and faster boarding for people with wheelchairs, strollers, luggage, and bicycles.
- More reliable service.
- Can usually be done in a way that improves the pedestrian accommodations and safety along major thoroughfares.
- Usually boosts business sales for all those located along the route, particularly near stations. This appears true for almost all retail uses.
- Reduces, or slows the growth of, vehicular congestion.
- Reduces operating costs over the long term. (5/17/06)

When is the Best Time for Community Input into the LRT Process?

Generally, the best time for input is “Now” and “As Early As Possible.” The earlier concerns can be voiced, the more impact such input may have.

Aside from those general rules, the best *two times are during the Draft EIS public comment process (April 21 – June 5, 2006) and the Preliminary Engineering phase (Late 2006 or early 2007 to Winter 2008/2009).*

When Will LRT be Built on University Avenue?

At the earliest, LRT could be up and running on University Avenue by 2011. There is substantial work that needs to be done including:

- Selection of the preferred mode by Metropolitan Council and preliminary approval of the Draft EIS by FTA. (By the end of 2006.)
- Design (also called Preliminary Engineering – PE) (Completed by Fall, 2008, by the Metropolitan Council). (Technically the DEIS will not be finalized until the end of PE.)
- Engineering drawings (also called Final Engineering or Design) (Completed by Winter, 2009 by the Minnesota Department of Transportation.)
- Construction (Completed by late 2011 or 2012 by the Minnesota Department of Transportation.) (4/25/06)

Is the Route Set? Are Station Locations Set?

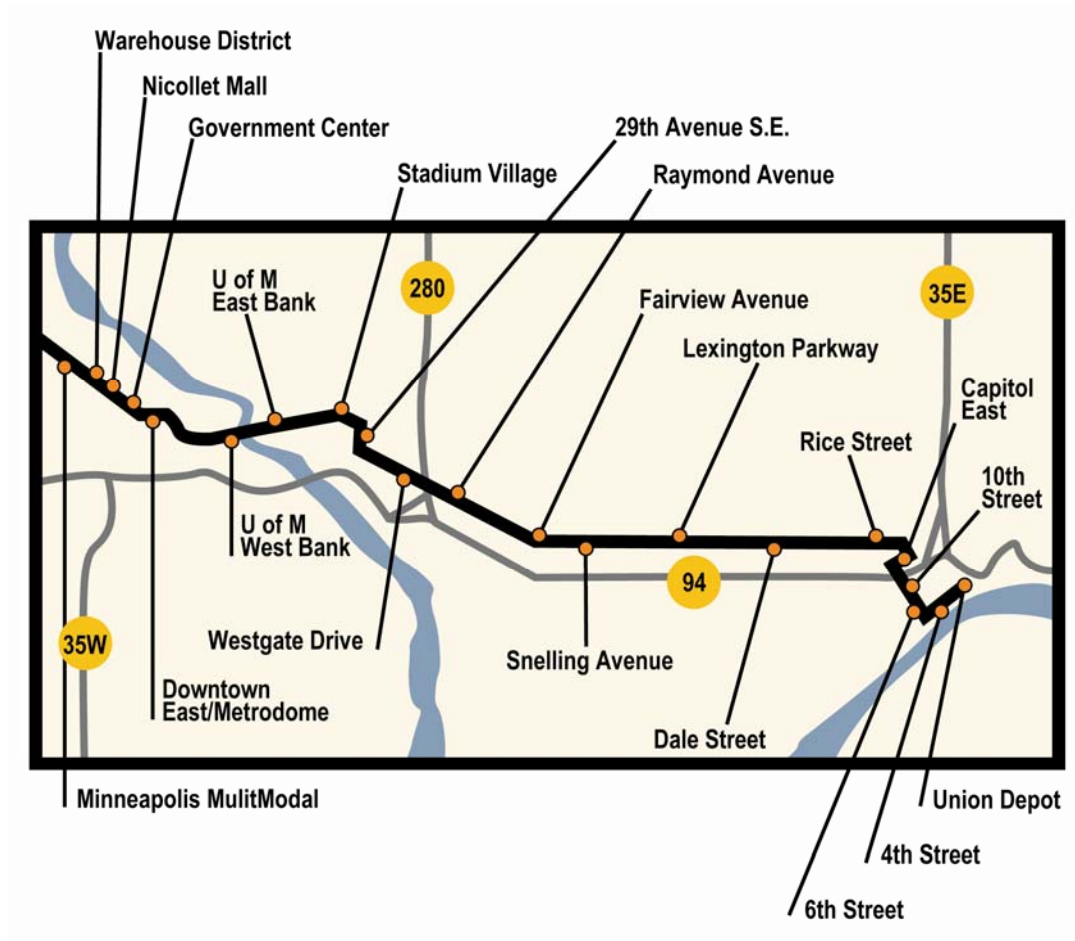
The Route has been established for each alternative: BRT and LRT. The University Avenue route for LRT was selected because it:

- Best serves the majority of transit riders in the corridor.
- Best serves commercial businesses in the corridor.
- Was determined that University Avenue was wide enough to accommodate both rail and vehicle traffic.
- Pedestrian access to the I-94 alternative was judged to be very poor. (4/25/06)

As for the station locations, there has been much debate as to the spacing and precise location. This analysis will continue into the Preliminary Engineering phase. The current approach is to site stations at major cross streets, spaced approximately ½- 1 mile apart. The basic tension is between having enough stations to serve the community, but not so many that the slowness of the trip discourages ridership. With bus Route 94 B&D remaining, those concerned with getting from downtown to downtown quickly will be accommodated. For those wanting transit that stops frequently, the Route 16 will continue to stop every other block. The bulk of riders that wish to go to major centers along Central Corridor will be accommodated by the LRT.

However, even given the amount of analysis that has occurred, the final number and location of stations is not yet set.

The proposed station locations are indicated on the map below.



Public comments on the station locations should be made during the Draft EIS public comment process (April 21 – June 5, 2006), and again during the Preliminary Engineering stage (Late, 2006 – Late, 2008). (4/25/06)

Is Bus Rapid Transit Still An Alternative?

BRT is one of the two alternatives still listed in the Draft EIS, so technically it is still an alternative. The BRT Alternative uses an exclusive right-of-way in the middle of University Avenue similar to LRT, but does not include the electrification system used for LRT.

BRT has some shortcomings that cannot be fixed, particularly with respect to capacity – it can carry less than 1/6th of that carried by LRT. So the general consensus is that if a major transit project is built it should be LRT.

The final determination on the preferred alternative will be made by the Metropolitan Council in June, 2006. (4/25/06)

What are the Comparative Capacities of the LRT & BRT Alternatives, and Maximizing Bus Service?

A regular-sized Metro Transit bus can carry up to 60 passengers and an articulated bus can carry up to 80 passengers. A 3-car LRT train can carry up to 450 passengers (although initially, 2-car trains are proposed). These passenger capacities assume approximately 25% of passengers are standing. The shortest effective time between buses is approximately 6 minutes. Any more frequent and the buses bunch up at stations with the lead bus or two totally full and the trailing bus almost empty. At 6-minute intervals, regular buses could carry a maximum of 600 (1200 in both directions) passengers per hour and articulated buses could carry a maximum of 800 (1,600 in both directions).

LRT trains can run at 5-minute intervals. With 3-car trains, LRT could carry a maximum of 5,400 passengers per hour (10,800 in both directions).

Projections of ridership in 2025 show that even articulated buses could not carry all of the demand. (5/17/06)

What Will University Avenue Look Like After Construction?

At this time, it is expected that the following components will be in place after construction:

- 24' to 28' wide LRT in the middle of the street with crosswalks to the stations
- Poles to carry electricity to the trains, probably between the tracks
- 2 lanes of through traffic in both directions
- Left turn lanes at signalized intersections (generally every ¼ mile/2 long blocks/4 short blocks).
- North-south traffic crossings at signalized intersections only
- The traffic signals to be coordinated with LRT (signal preference, not signal priority). Left turn arrows will be used to avoid conflicts with the LRT.
- Retain existing on-street parking, except at station locations
- New street surface
- New 10' sidewalk areas with landscaping, lighting, bus shelters for the Rt. 16 buses and north-south buses
- To see a short clip of how the LRT will work on University Avenue, see the City website at www.stpaul.gov/depts/publicworks/ and select LRT video #1 (4/25/06)

Where Will the Central Corridor LRT Line Connect with the Hiawatha Corridor?

The Central Corridor and Hiawatha Corridor will join at the major station on the north side of the Metrodome. The Central Corridor will share the existing tracks to the west through downtown Minneapolis. (4/25/06)

What Role Does the Union Depot Serve?

The Union Depot anchors the east end of the LRT line, and will connect LRT Amtrak service, inter-city bus service, Metropolitan Transit bus service, commuter rail service and, perhaps, high speed rail service to Chicago. Union Depot will be the most effective and efficient “multi-modal” hub in the metropolitan area and one of the best in the country.

For a visual depiction of the Depot and new service go to www.stpaul.gov/depts/publicworks/ and select LRT Video #2. (4/25/06)

What Will Happen to Bus Service on University Avenue?

When LRT is built, the Rt. 50 bus will be eliminated. The Rt. 16 bus will remain, with some reductions in service frequency. The City believes that most of the Rt. 16 service should stay in the first few years of LRT operation. (4/25/06)

How Do Riders Get On and Off?

Stations will be in the middle of University Avenue, requiring passengers to use crosswalks at the end of the station. Curbs and railings will ensure passenger safety once on the platform. Passenger access of the station will occur during the “walk” phase of the signalized intersection.

Many new LRT vehicles are now all “low floor.” That means that the height of the platform (approximately 14”) and the height of the vehicle floor are the same, allowing for easy and rapid entering and exiting. They are also, therefore, wheelchair-accessible.

Tickets may be purchased from machines at the platforms. Monthly Metro Transit passes and bus transfers will also be honored. (4/25/06)

How Will Pedestrian and Vehicular Safety Be Ensured Along the LRT Route?

This is an extremely important question that requires detailed design answers at each major intersection. However a few comments here:

- Generally, University Avenue has some safety features that are superior to Hiawatha Corridor. The intersections are at 90 degree angles, with excellent sight lines and traditional designs. In addition, the prevailing vehicular speeds on University Avenue are lower than on Hiawatha Avenue. Finally, the LRT will operate down the middle of the street rather than on a right-of-way parallel to the Avenue.
- North American LRT system statistics show that an extremely high percentage of accidents between LRT and motor vehicles and pedestrians are when the motorists/pedestrians are crossing the LRT tracks illegally. Although this does not minimize the tragedy of such accidents, it strongly suggests the need for public education and legible signage.

- Vehicles may only cross the LRT tracks when there is an appropriate green light or arrow. There have been almost no accidents in North America where the LRT vehicle violated such signals. All intersections with the LRT tracks will have signals.
- Likewise, pedestrians may only cross the LRT tracks at signalized intersections, and the platforms (stations) will have railings to protect pedestrians from the cars. Finally, there are other safety design features for pedestrians to prevent stepping in front of trains.
- Hearing impaired residents will be signaled of the coming of the train by a special lights program. Visually impaired and pedestrians generally will be signaled of the train's approach with a bell or whistle (similar to Hiawatha). (4/25/06)

What Will LRT Construction Cost?

Current estimate (based on an LRT opening of 2008) is \$840 million. The Federal government typically pays 50% of the construction costs, with the rest being paid "locally" (by State, County, City and private contributions). The distribution of costs will be set over the next 2 to 3 years of local work on LRT. Currently, it is anticipated that 2/3rds of the local share will come from the State of Minnesota and the remaining 1/3rd from the two counties. (5/17/06)

What Will it Cost to Operate LRT?

The estimates on operations will vary depending on the number of trains, number of stops, frequency and the savings in current bus service reductions (Route 50 will be eliminated, and Route 16 will be reduced in frequency). However, precise operations estimates must be done and local funding sources in place before the Federal government will pay any of the capital construction costs. (4/25/06)

Will the Cost to Operate LRT Detract from Funding for the Bus System?

For the Hiawatha Corridor LRT, the Legislature directed that the state would pay for ½ of the operating costs and Hennepin County would pay the other ½, after the revenue from fares.

There is widespread agreement that current funding of the regional bus service is inadequate for the demand. In addition, the bus system will continue to carry the vast majority of transit users, even after an LRT system is built. Finally, to offer the best service to transit riders the north-south bus routes need more frequency, and feeder bus service (i.e. old Rt. 76) should be explored. (4/25/06)

What Can Be Done to Prevent LRT Riders from Parking in Front of My Business/Residence?

This is an important public policy issue that will be studied as part of the Preliminary Engineering process. Some of the possible elements include:

- Metered parking along portions of University Avenue

- Permit parking districts in residential neighborhoods within ¼ mile of stations
- Construction of park and ride lots in the corridor or in suburban locations with frequent bus connections to the LRT line
- Vast improvements to the north-south bus service. (4/25/06)

Will LRT Restrict Pedestrian Access to My Business?

During construction, depending on the construction techniques selected in the Preliminary Engineering phase, some access may be restricted for short periods of time. After LRT is completed, there will be no restrictions to pedestrian access. (4/25/06)

Will Someone Subsidize My Business Losses Due to the Construction Process?

The City undertakes many construction projects each year without compensation to businesses or property owners. However, on major projects such as this, there will be special accommodations for businesses. In particular, various construction techniques can be used to limit impacts on businesses. These techniques will be discussed during the Preliminary Engineering phase beginning in Fall, 2006. A Construction Mitigation plan will be developed in participation with businesses along University Avenue. (4/25/06)

How Will My Business Survive the Construction Process?

The Construction Mitigation plan may include some of the following:

- Marketing
- Signage
- Area-wide promotions
- Maintaining access to businesses
- Cessation of construction during peak retail periods
- Assistance from the Business Impacts committee of the Chamber of Commerce
Central Corridor Partnership (4/25/06)

What Property is Needed for LRT Construction?

Within Saint Paul, the LRT will stay within the 120' right of way that currently exists along University Avenue. There are areas where curbs will need to be moved a few feet. No businesses or homes in Saint Paul need to be acquired or relocated for construction of LRT. Preliminary Engineering analysis will identify the specifics of curb and lane alignments.

(There may have to be acquisition of a few businesses near the University of Minnesota.)

Precise acquisition measurements for sliver properties (if any) will be determined during the Preliminary Engineering phase. (4/25/06)

What is Eminent Domain and Will It Be Used for This Project?

There are two basic means by which a government can obtain private property for public purposes: *Negotiated Purchase* and *Eminent Domain*. The strong preference for most cities on most projects is to negotiate a purchase of property. However, when there is a reluctant seller that would otherwise block an important public project, governments may use eminent domain.

Eminent Domain is the power of a government to take private property for public use. The 5th Amendment of the US Constitution and articles in many state constitutions allow this practice provided that “just compensation” is made. For all non-residential property purchase the government must also assist in finding a suitable relocation site. (4/25/06)

What Impact Might LRT Have on Property Values?

This is a commonly asked question for which precise answers cannot be made. There have been numerous studies nationally that evaluate property values within ¼ mile and ½ mile of stations. But it is impossible to know what other forces are affecting the market and by how much.

External economic forces will likely have a much greater impact on property values – forces such as *gas prices*, *congestion on freeways* in the region, and the *overall real estate market* in the region. For the Hiawatha Corridor, it is a bit early to ascribe increases in property values to LRT. The experience in North America is that it takes up to 30 years to see the total development potential along an LRT corridor

Generally, the value of property is most impacted within ¼ mile of station areas. Initially, property right along University Avenue may see an increase in valuations, followed in 3 to 10 years by areas further from the station. However, as we have already seen, property value increases are already being driven by external forces. (4/25/06)

Will LRT Yield Quality Jobs for Those Living Near It?

Transit generates *employment opportunities* in a variety of ways. As a major public works project, there will be a significant number of construction jobs created. People will also be hired to operate the line. Of greater impact will be the jobs that are likely to concentrate along the line as a result of improved access.

In addition, area *residents* will have easier and less expensive access to jobs in downtown Saint Paul, downtown Minneapolis, the University of Minnesota, the airport, the Mall of America, and all points in between. Experience elsewhere in North America indicates that employers tend to locate near improved transit because of the easy access for employees and customers. There will also be jobs generated by the economic development likely to be spurred by the transit project.

Also, there will be *construction jobs*. Governed by federal law, construction of LRT must maximize job opportunities for community residents. The Metropolitan Council

will administer the construction contracts for the federal government with respect to employment practices.

Finally, contracts will have a Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) goal. (4/25/06)

DRAFT

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

The **Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority** (RCRRA) is overseeing the Draft Environmental Impact Statement process during the Spring & Summer, 2006. Please check their website at www.centralcorridor.org.

What is the Environmental Impact Statement?

DEFINITION OF AN EIS: An in-depth analysis used for major development projects that will significantly change the environment. The statement covers social and economic influences, as well as environmental impact, and looks at alternate ways to proceed with the project. The EIS also examines whether there are alternative project designs or locations that would result in fewer environmental impacts.

In addition, the EIS process will:

- Select a preferred alternative (see below); and
- Outline issues to be considered in the Preliminary Engineering phase, to begin in early 2007. (5/17/06)

Why Should I Comment on the LRT Project?

Comments can provide the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority (RCRRA) and Metropolitan Council with additional information on the proposal. In addition, comments may provide input on possible solutions or alternatives that would reduce environmental impacts. Your comments can:

- Reduce the potential for unintended environmental impacts;
- Provide information to the RCRRA/Metropolitan Council that might not be available through other sources;
- Ensure that the RCRRA/Metropolitan Council is identifying and analyzing the impacts and values that are important to you and others;
- Give the RCRRA/Metropolitan Council and others a better understanding of the public perception and concerns about the project;
- May encourage the RCRRA/Metropolitan Council and others to consider environmental impacts and citizen concerns earlier in the project's planning process; and
- Ultimately result in a better project. (5/17/06)

What Types of Comments Are Accepted?

Comments that focus on the *mode* choice (LRT versus Bus Rapid Transit), and *issues that should be investigated* during the detailed planning phase (Preliminary Engineering) to begin in early 2007. Public comments are particularly valuable and helpful when:

- They list inaccuracies
- They show potential environmental impacts that have not been identified

- They outline ways in which certain impacts have not been adequately addressed
- They suggest possible measures to lessen impacts that could or should be considered during the Preliminary Engineering process. (5/17/06)

What is the Schedule for the Environmental Impact Statement?

On April 21, 2006, the Draft EIS was officially released for public review. The public hearing record of the RCRRA will stay open until June 5, 2006.

- The Federal Transit Administration publishes a “Notice of Availability” of the Draft EIS in the Federal Register
- The Central Corridor Coordinating Committee will hold four public hearings the week of May 22 to receive oral and written comments, and will continue to receive written comments throughout the 45-day comment period.
- After consideration, the Central Corridor Coordinating Committee will transmit the Draft EIS and a recommendation on a preferred alternative to the Metropolitan Council on June 6, 2006.
- The Metropolitan Council, during the month of June, will decide on a mode (LRT vs. BRT) and list issues to be considered during the Preliminary Engineering phase. It will transmit its modal preference and list of issues to the Federal Transit Administration by June 30, 2006.
- The Metropolitan Council prepares written responses to all comments, prepares the Final EIS and issues a press release. *This can only be completed after the Preliminary Engineering process (probably 2 years of work) is finalized.*
- At the end of the Preliminary Engineering phase – perhaps in Fall, 2008 - there will be a brief, additional public comment period on the Draft EIS. The Federal Transit Administration will then determine adequacy of the Final EIS and publish a “Record of Decision.” (4/25/06)

What Decision Will Come Out of the Environmental Impact Statement Process?

The preferred alternative (there are currently two) will be recommended by the **Central Corridor Coordinating Committee** (defined below) to the Metropolitan Council for final adoption in June, 2006. The two alternatives are:

- LRT on an exclusive right of way
- BRT (bus rapid transit) on an exclusive right of way

The **Central Corridor Coordinating Committee** has already made a preliminary recommendation in favor of LRT. Over the course of preliminary engineering, decisions will be made on how to deal with the impacts identified in the Draft EIS. (4/25/06)

How Can I Get a Copy of the Draft EIS when it is Released?

Due to the size of the Draft EIS, a limited number of paper copies have been printed. Groups and organizations will receive one paper copy. Copies will be available for reading at local libraries. In addition, the Draft EIS is available on the Ramsey County

Regional Rail Authority web site <http://www.centralcorridor.org>, and may also be available in a CD format. (5/02/06)

How Long Will I Have to Review and Comment?

The process was set by the Central Corridor Coordinating Committee to commence on April 21, 2006 and conclude on June 5, 2006. The process is outlined at <http://www.centralcorridor.org/>. (4/25/06)

What is the City's Role in the EIS Process?

Officially, the City's role is to review and comment on the Draft EIS. In addition, the City has participated on the Central Corridor Coordinating Committee, both via Councilmember Benanav and via City staff participation on the Technical Advisory Committee to the CCCC. (4/25/06)

The City is Also Holding a Public Hearing – on May 17. Why?

The Mayor and City Council want to make official City responses to the Draft EIS public hearing process and have set May 17 at 5:30 as the time for the City Council's hearing. The City will make a recommendation on mode (LRT vs. BRT) by June 5, 2006 and will hold the hearing record open until July 19, 2006 to receive comments on issues to be considered in the Preliminary Engineering phase. (4/25/06)

Who Will Make the Final Decisions on the EIS?

The *Central Corridor Coordinating Committee* will make recommendations to the *Metropolitan Council* and the *Federal Transit Administration*. The Federal government makes the final determination on the adequacy of the EIS; after the Preliminary Engineering phase, probably in late 2008. (4/25/06)

What is the Central Corridor Coordinating Committee?

The CCCC is a body of mostly elected officials from the two cities and two counties. Officials from the Metropolitan Council, Minnesota Department of Transportation, and the University of Minnesota are also on the CCCC. St. Paul's official representative is Councilmember Jay Benanav. Ramsey County's representatives are Commissioners Janice Rettman and Rafael Ortega. (4/25/06)

When the project proceeds beyond the Draft EIS phase, a new group, the *Central Corridor Management Committee* (CCMC), will assume responsibility for oversight of the project. The CCMC is set in state law and is similar in makeup to the CCCC. (4/25/06)

PRELIMINARY ENGINEERING

During the preliminary engineering (PE) phase of projects, the *Metropolitan Council* will take the lead, in coordination with the community, RCRRA, HCRRA, Minneapolis, St. Paul, the University of Minnesota, and Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT). The PE process will refine the design of the proposal, taking in all reasonable design alternatives. PE will result in Preliminary Design Plans, including estimates of project costs, benefits; and impacts at a high level of detail.

For community purposes, the PE process will result in all decisions of:

- Design and location of the tracks and catenary (overhead electrical) lines;
- Design and precise location of station platforms, as well as accommodations for public art;
- Design and location of sidewalk improvement, landscaping, and lighting
- Construction phasing and implementation approach (some specifics to come in subsequent Final Design);
- Construction mitigation commitments;
- Right of way acquisition requirements; and
- Capital Cost allocations to City, County, State, Federal governments. (4/25/06)

What is the Preliminary Engineering Public Process?

The design and timing of the public process will be set by the Metropolitan Council, who is in charge of this phase of the process. Reviewing the Hiawatha LRT project approach, the following will be likely features of the public process:

- Establishment of a “Central Corridor Management Committee” to oversee the project and report to the Metropolitan Council. The CCMC will include elected officials from the City and Ramsey County, as well as the City of Minneapolis, Hennepin County, and the University of Minnesota (required by statute).
- Establishment of a community input committee, which will have sub-committees assigned to such issues as: construction mitigation; construction phasing; sidewalk improvements; and public art. It is anticipated that the community input committee will provide for citizens and organizations to have input throughout Preliminary Engineering. There will probably also be an opportunity to testify at the City hearing at the conclusion of Preliminary Design.

PE will likely take 18 to 24 months and consultants will be hired to manage much of the process and do much of the technical work. (4/25/06)

What is the City’s Role in Preliminary Engineering?

At this time, it is uncertain what process the Metropolitan Council may employ. However, the City will be intimately involved with:

- Reviewing and approving the Preliminary Design Plans.

- Ensuring that the public participation process meets the needs of the communities along the route in St. Paul.
- Helping to design the construction mitigation plans
- Undertaking a detailed planning process with the communities to set the stage for future development. (4/25/06)

What is the Preliminary Design Plan? (State Statutes 2005, 473.3994)

The Preliminary Design Plan is the collection of decisions recommended in Preliminary Engineering related to the physical improvements envisioned. The City must hold a public hearing and may ‘approve’ or ‘disapprove’ the Preliminary Design Plan. If the City chooses to disapprove, the City must “...describe specific amendments to the plans that, if adopted, would cause the City to withdraw its disapproval.” The Metropolitan Council will then determine, based on comments, how the Plan should be amended.

At this point the Final Design Plan may be developed. When completed, it goes through the same ‘approval process’ as the Preliminary Design Plan. (4/25/06)

FINAL DESIGN

The *Minnesota Department of Transportation* (MnDOT) will be the lead for the Final Design phase of the project. Final Design is the last phase before construction and includes:

- Right of way acquisition;
- Utility relocation;
- Preparation of final construction plans;
- Preparation of detailed specifications;
- Updated cost estimates;
- Finalized financial plan;
- Preparation of a Plan for collection and analysis of data needed to undertake a “Before and After Study”; and
- Bid documents

FD will take 12 to 18 months to complete. (4/25/06)

What is a Full Funding Grant Agreement?

A Full Funding Grant Agreement (FFGA) is a legal document between the State and Federal governments assuring that the “local” share constitute at least 50% of the construction costs and that an Operations and Maintenance” plan is in place. A FFGA is required before any LRT system receives substantial amounts of federal monies for construction. Such approval typically takes place during the Final Design phase of the project. (4/25/06)

CONSTRUCTION

The *Minnesota Department of Transportation* (MnDOT) will be the lead agency for overseeing construction. It is expected that the two cities, two counties and University of Minnesota will have staff along the corridor to answer questions and help solve problems during the construction phase.

When Will Construction Take Place and How Long Will It Last?

At the earliest, construction will begin in 2009. Most of the construction will be done in 2 years, but a third construction season may be necessary to complete some of the detailed work on railings and stations. This does not mean that the street will be torn up for 2 years at any point along University Avenue. In most places, the disruption will be between 1 and 4 months. (4/25/06)

Who Will Operate the LRT System When it is Built?

Metro Transit will operate the system when built, just as it does for the Hiawatha Corridor. (4/25/06)

What is the Service Planned for LRT?

LRT service is planned to be at least every 7 ½ minutes in each direction. It could be more frequent in the future if ridership demand warrants. (4/25/06)

Contacts/Further Information

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To see a short clip of how the LRT will work on University Avenue, see the City website at www.stpaul.gov/depts/publicworks/ and select LRT video #1

Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority

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Central Corridor Partnership

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District Councils Collaborative of St. Paul and Minneapolis

www.districtcouncilscollaborative.org (under construction, due by 5/1/06)

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